Migration news roundup 20 February 2024

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Stories that inspired us this week

A traditional Hong Kong ‘hawker market’ came to Birmingham as part of recent Lunar New Year celebrations, organised by the local Hong Kong migrant community. (Source: Birmingham Live)

Onjali Rauf’s wonderful children’s book about a Syrian refugee boy in the UK, ‘The Boy at the Back of the Class’, has been adapted for the stage – national tour coming to Sheffield from 5 March. (Source: the Guardian)

International news

More than 3,000 people died trying to reach the EU via the Mediterranean last year. Many rescue organisations argue this could have been avoided if EU countries had changed their regulations. (Source: the Guardian)

This briefing highlights the need to protect migrant and refugee human rights against the increase of certain digital technology in migrant management systems around the world. (Source: Amnesty International)

The number of Chinese migrants attempting to enter the US along the Mexican border without a visa in 2023 increased

tenfold compared with 2022. (Source: Nikkei Asia)

UK borders and migration policy

Why did a peer say: ‘Saying a dog is a cat doesn't make it such. It may be your opinion, but it isn't true’? The House of Lords has been scrutinising the Rwanda Bill line-by-line, with critique from across all party affiliations. During the debate, it was argued ‘allies’ who supported the British troops overseas should be exempt from removal to Rwanda. Next the Lords will vote on the proposed amendments before the Bill returns to the House of Commons, which could pass into law by the end of March. Separately, the Joint Committee on Human Rights, a cross-party parliamentary committee, declared the Rwanda policy as incompatible with human rights safeguards that could damage the UK’s reputation. It said the courts are the most appropriate place to determine the safety of Rwanda, rather than in legislation. (Sources: The Standard, BBC, UK Parliament)

The Home Office is reportedly planning to pay Albanian ‘influencers’ on TikTok to discourage people from crossing the Channel in a small boat, as part of a bigger social media campaign of deterrence. (Source: ITV)

Six people were taken to hospital when migrants were found in the back of a lorry arriving in East Sussex from France. One person was arrested on suspicion of ‘facilitating illegal entry to the UK’; a second person was arrested for ‘illegally entering the UK’. (Source: Sky News)

‘What I see, all the time, is waste of human capital’ - the outgoing Chief Inspector of Borders has criticised the government for obstructing inspections, being unwilling to learn lessons and having no asylum housing strategy. Assessments of the Afghan resettlement schemes (dated June 2023) and the use of hotels for unaccompanied children (dated November 2023) are two of 14 completed inspection reports awaiting publication by the Home Office. (Sources: Financial Times, Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration)

Specific migrant groups

Plans to reduce the use of hotels as asylum housing include offering landlords five-year deals, where the payment of rent and bills are guaranteed. However, there are also warnings about the impact dispersed accommodation can have on communities in places where housing is cheapest, including parts of Yorkshire and Humber. (Source: Telegraph)

The current government consultation into reforming eligibility for social housing appears to target refugees who have come through the asylum system, according to this article, although it suggests it is unlikely to have a significant impact on local authority practice. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) consultation closes on 26 March. (Sources: Free Movement, DLUHC)

The Home Secretary is investigating if there is a link between asylum seekers converting to Christianity and being granted

asylum, following a recent high-profile story about a man who attacked his partner with a corrosive substance. (Source: Info Migrants)

More than 700 frontline NHS staff are being investigated amid suspicion that they may have cheated in qualification tests before being able to come to work in the UK. (Source: the Guardian)

The number of overseas student applications for undergraduate courses starting in September 2024 is on the rise despite recent changes to student visa policy, although applications do not always translate into enrolments and there's been a fall in applications from Nigerian and Indian students. (Sources: BBC, MSN/Telegraph)

There are more stories of EU nationals facing confusion and threats of deportation, when trying to secure their status in the UK post-Brexit. (Source: Sky News)

London's six overground train lines have been renamed, including one now called The Windrush Line to honour the Windrush community. The new Windrush line is red and runs through several areas with Caribbean communities. (Source: BBC)

Cohesion and integration

A recent study looks at the impact of Hostile Environment policies on the mental health of Black Caribbean people, finding

it to have had a greater impact than the coronavirus lockdown had on the wider population. Also, a report has been published on the mental health of refugee and asylum seekers in the UK, including calls for a clear strategy from the government for refugee integration as part of its recommendations. (Sources: the Guardian, Mental Health Foundation.)

A new Conversation Club is starting in March at Halton Library, in Leeds – all are welcome. It aims to provide a friendly environment to practise English and access library services. (Source: Leeds Inspired)

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